

BOBBY L. RUSH

1ST DISTRICT, ILLINOIS



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LIVESTOCK AND FOREIGN AGRICULTURE
NUTRITION, OVERSIGHT, AND DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

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November 10, 2021

The Honorable Michael S. Regan
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Regan:

I am writing to bring attention to an ongoing problem in many of the suburban villages and towns in my district. For far too long, these communities have struggled to secure affordable and dependable supplies of clean water for their residents. My constituents in the south suburbs of Chicago, Illinois need and deserve a clean supply of fresh water, but this cannot be guaranteed as we do not know the state of the water supply and distribution systems throughout the region. I urge the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to work together with the State of Illinois to swiftly rectify that to ensure that residents have access to safe and clean drinking water.

Unfortunately, this is not a new problem. In 2009, whistleblowers discovered that the Village of Crestwood in my district had been using water from a well contaminated by toxic chemicals for over 20 years. They bravely and heroically brought the situation to the public's attention. Just 15 miles away and a few years later, Sauk Village also discovered contamination from toxic chemicals in its water supply and had to supply residents with bottled water for nearly a month before resolving the issue.

Most recently, thousands of my constituents in Dixmoor were forced to go without reliable water for weeks on end due to a break in a water main. Even after the break was repaired, there have been challenges providing adequate pressure to deliver water to residents, and these challenges remain ongoing. This is simply an unacceptable and disgraceful state of affairs.

A Chicago Tribune investigation found that Dixmoor "is just one of many south suburbs beset with aging infrastructure that is prone to leaks and water loss for which residents, nonetheless, still pay"¹. The financial straits that many of these south suburban municipalities find themselves in

¹ Buckley, Madeline and Yan, Jade. "What went wrong with Dixmoor's water? How squabbling and crumbling infrastructure left thousands in Chicago suburb without 'a human right'". November 8, 2021.
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-dixmoor-water-crisis-chicago-south-suburbs-20211108-sg3umru7nzeaffzxhrbcgjcne-story.html>

due to structural disadvantages and the COVID-19 pandemic mean that they are simply not in a fiscal place to take on their water issues alone. The lurking threats to these towns' water systems must be addressed — and I call on the State and Federal Governments to step in to assist these municipalities.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides tens of billions of dollars to tackle water infrastructure, meaning that Illinois is in line to receive over \$1.5 billion. These funds can be used to provide the help that towns like Dixmoor so desperately need, but in order for the funds to be properly distributed, we must have a comprehensive understanding of the water supply and delivery system for the south suburbs of Chicago.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the EPA commits to ensuring the completion of a study on the water supply and delivery systems for the south suburbs of Chicago immediately. If you have additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable JB Pritzker
Governor of the State of Illinois

The Honorable John J. Kim
Director of the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Ms. Debra Shore
Region V Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency